

## Bike Test

ALTERNATIVE HARDTAILS  
£1,200-£1,600

### WORTH THE WAIT

Onza have been working on the Payoff and Jackpot frames for two years and that shows in the innovative detailing and outstanding ride quality

### BIG BROTHER

If you want more travel and mid-size wheels the Onza Jackpot uses a similar frame with 150mm Revelation fork and Reverb dropper post for £1,850

### DEVIL IN THE DETAIL

The fat-axled Onza crankset maximises power delivery and the press-fit BB30 bottom bracket can be converted into a chain-tensioning singlespeed set-up

# ONZA PAYOFF

£1,600

Sweetly detailed big-wheeled trail fun from reborn UK brand

### SO GOOD

Outstandingly well balanced, trail blasting ride

Well thought out single-ring spec maximises big ride or big fun versatility

### NO GOOD

Aggro riders might be better building up a slacker, grippier bike via Onza's custom programme

Narrow-range cassette is a killer on steep climbs

### JARGON BUSTER

**Narrow/wide ring**  
Single chainring that uses alternating thick and thin teeth for extra chain retention security.

**Brazing**  
An old construction method where metal sections are joined with melted brass rather than welded.

If your ears pricked up at the mention of Onza then you've obviously been into biking for a while, but the new Payoff is a great mix of retro-referenced detail and totally modern trail bike with left field appeal at an affordable price.

## The frame

Onza's own-brand 'Flawless' tubing is a retro choice designed to deliver a smooth ride without rear suspension. There's an impressive level of detailing right through the frame too. The tapered head tube backs onto the 35mm diameter down tube with extra support from an open-backed throat gusset. The bottom bracket is an oversize PF30 set-up – rare on a steel frame – and there's an eccentric insert in the pipeline to allow simple singlespeed chain adjustment.

The chainstays sprout from a big, forged wishbone bridge box. Their flat-to-round section adds a natural spring effect to the rear end while big, angular 3D dropouts hold replaceable axle inserts set up as 142x12mm as standard. The cantilevered post brake mount leads neatly into top tube routing. The 27.2mm seatpost diameter limits aftermarket dropper

post choice but the long-levered QR clamp is easy to open and close on the fly and the single-bend seat tube means you can drop the saddle right down even without hydraulic help.

Painted Payoff frames are electroplated internally to stop corrosion (raw finish 'Acid Bath' frames aren't) and at £379 are great value if you want to build up your own bike. You're limited to just 17 or 19in sizes but there's a 650b wheeled Jackpot version and the Payoff will take 2.8in 650b+ tyres too.

## The kit

The Payoff's Shimano SLX baseline saves weight and slightly improves function and durability over the Deore kit found on other bikes here. Onza provide their own usefully stiff BB30 crankset with 32t narrow/wide ring for a clean and lightweight transmission. Thankfully there's a wider range cassette in the pipeline in case you haven't got the power and determination to grunt the bike up steep hills with its current 11-34t block.

The wheels and Kenda tyres are helpfully light and the RockShox Revelation fork is controlled enough on descents to make it worth earning the

vertical gain. Onza provide the finishing kit, including a well shaped 750mm bar and retro Ules grips. Onza also offer a full custom build programme so you can build your dream bike.

## The ride

A dream build is definitely worth considering too, because the more we rode the Payoff, the more we appreciated just what a great frame this is for blasting typical UK trails. Larger diameter frame tubes and the box-backed PF30 bottom bracket mean it's definitely stiffer and easier to hustle up to speed than the Surly. The Slant Six tyres are very fast-rolling too, so once you've heaved it through the first few pedal strokes it accelerates with encouraging responsiveness. Add enthusiastic hop-and-pop responsiveness and we were surprised by how much time we spent at the flat-out end of the gears even on rollercoaster trails.

There's plenty of accurate, clearly communicated trail feedback coming through the grips and pedals but the carefully shaped back end keeps the frame just compliant enough for comfort and consistent connection. It's definitely smoother than an alloy



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EVEN ON ROLLERCOASTER TRAILS



bike over rocky sections, with less sting through your shoes and a spring-and-ping, rather than clatter-and-batter, response to impacts.

If you really want to push on, the tapered head tube will take a 140mm (5.5in) travel fork to slacken things up without pulling the bottom bracket too high or voiding the warranty. The steeper stock head angle does reduce the potential barge effect of the bigger wheels on tight trails though, and

makes the steering less floppy and fussy at slower speeds, particularly on climbs or when you're knackered at the end of an epic exploring day. A more aggressive handling set up would put more load through the relatively slippery front tyre and 120mm fork than they could comfortably handle too, and create a heavier, slower bike for tamer trails.

The Onza is still the most naturally rowdy, 'pop the front wheel, slide the

back end, launch that drop, make the most of every metre of trail' bike here by a big slice anyway and the frame-only and custom build options let you wring maximum potential out of this top-quality trail ripper. »

**MBUK**

Excellent frame delivers tough, trail ready, steel-sprung fun at a cracking price

